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3 May 1957

AQUATONE/OILSTONE PROJECT

1. Status:

a. Weather conditions are generally favorable for aerial reconnaissance over Europe and most of Siberia from April through October and in the Far East are moderately good in summer and at their best during the autumn.

25X1D b. AQUATONE Detachments are now in place and operational in Germany and Turkey with four aircraft each and in Japan with three aircraft. They fly occasional weather missions [redacted]

25X1C [redacted] The Detachment in Turkey carries out occasional reconnaissance over the Middle East.

[redacted]

d. A similar military capability is currently being developed by the Air Force which is equipping a SAC squadron with Air Force procured U-2 aircraft. This unit will be operationally ready and available for deployment by 1 August 1957.

e. It now appears that the U-2 will be relatively safe from interception at least through the present reconnaissance season and possibly, under certain circumstances, considerably longer. Nevertheless, both its margin of advantage and the security surrounding this operation are subject to continuous erosion so the AQUATONE capability must be regarded as a wasting asset.

2. Plans for the Current Season: Additional hard intelligence obtainable only through aerial reconnaissance is urgently required, especially on developments and installations having to do with Soviet guided missiles, nuclear weapons, and intercontinental bombers. To cover thirty-five such targets which have been selected by the Intelligence Community as having the highest priority should require some twelve to fifteen successful missions, taking account of normal weather patterns. If permission is granted to conduct these overflights it is proposed that they be undertaken only as highly favorable weather materializes so as to obtain maximum coverage with a minimum number of sorties. This would imply a rate of operation of only one to three missions per week.

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ADDITIONAL BUSINESS CONCERNING PROJECT

AQUATONE/OILSTONE

The paper on AQUATONE prepared for submission to higher authority contains a brief account of the current status of the Project and plans for operations during the current season. All other issues were excluded in order to focus attention on the major decision required at this time. It was agreed, however, in conversations with representatives of the Air Force that the following additional matters be discussed orally with the political authorities along the lines indicated under each heading.

1. Alternative Lower Priority Targets: If authority cannot now be granted to overfly some or all of the highest priority targets in the USSR it is important to determine whether:

(a) Overflights of the following lower priority areas (listed in the order of priority) should now be conducted:

(1) Specified peripheral areas of the USSR.

(2) China.

(3) European Satellites, or

(b) There is sufficient prospect of receiving at a later date authority for overflights of the USSR to warrant postponing operations over lower priority areas.

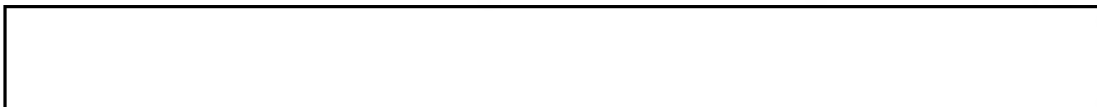
2. The RAINBOW Program: During the last nine months significant progress has been achieved through this Project in the development of radar camouflage. It is believed that the radar reflectivity of the U-2 aircraft can be so reduced as to create a good chance that a majority of overflight missions will avoid detection entirely. Nevertheless, it must be anticipated that at least a certain proportion of them will be detected, although their continuous tracking should be extremely difficult. Our plan is to equip the U-2 aircraft with this protection if and as it is operationally developed. If it is effective, it will reduce not only the likelihood of detection and tracking but also the possibility of interception even after the Soviets have developed aircraft or missiles capable of operating at extreme altitudes.

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3. Maintenance of a Non-Military Overflight Capability: The principal reason for developing the AQUATONE capability originally within a CIA framework (but as a joint Air Force/CIA Project) rather than in the Air Force was to maintain greater security, employ deeper cover, use civilian pilots, keep the aircraft outside of military control, and therefore, make possible more plausible denial of U.S. military responsibility in the face of any Soviet charges. On the other hand, it can be argued that an operation of this character can be conducted as securely by military units operating under military cover as by the Clandestine Service, that the distinction between military and civilian control is irrelevant to the possibility of denial and therefore that this tool is politically no more useable for overflights in the hands of the Clandestine Service than in the regular military establishment. Although this issue could be debated at length between this Agency and the Air Force, what is really important is the attitude of the political authorities of our Government. The decisive question is whether they believe (rightly or wrongly) that the use of U-2 aircraft for overflights by the Clandestine Service will give rise to lesser risks of embarrassment or counteraction than their use by a tactical military arm. If this does turn out to be their view, it would seem to be worthwhile to continue the present joint operation through 1958, probably with some changes in organization and cover and on a reduced scale, in order to maintain the capability where it would be most likely to be used. Meanwhile the parallel Air Force capability would be developed separately. If, however, the political authorities believe that the political risks are the same for nonmilitary as for military overflight operations, then it is proposed that CIA's equipment be transferred to the Air Force at the end of the current reconnaissance season.

4. Proposed Modification of Operational Concept: If the present joint project organized within a CIA framework is continued beyond the present season, consideration will be given to the following modifications of present operational concepts. Their purpose would be to reduce the political hazards to which overflights give rise or to be prepared for unfavorable political developments and thus to render the U-2 capability politically more useable.



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b. The modification of a few of the Agency's aircraft to permit basing them on an aircraft carrier and thereby to avoid the exposure of friendly governments to political and diplomatic pressures.

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AQUATONE MEETING
9:30 a.m. Monday, 6 May 1957

BRIEFING NOTES FOR DCI

The following are points you may wish to make orally in the forthcoming meeting on AQUATONE.

1. Russian awareness of U.S. overflights, though undoubtedly a source of irritation, should increase their willingness to consider a realistic mutual inspection system and in particular an effective version of the open skies proposals. The knowledge that they cannot altogether prevent aerial reconnaissance should increase the attractiveness to them of a plan to control and regularize it.

2. Although overflights can be regarded as provocative, it is difficult to understand how they could provoke any counter action except the most vigorous efforts at interception. The Russians know, even if no overflights are conducted, that our offensive air capability exists. They have given every evidence of believing correctly that overflights are conducted only for reconnaissance purposes. Above all, knowledge that it is possible for our aircraft to overfly their country beyond the reach of interception, would be a powerful deterrent to overt attack no matter how "provoking".

4. The President's Advisory Committee on foreign intelligence has unanimously recommended that overflight missions be resumed.

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